

Strategies for Assessing and Adapting OER for Inclusion: A Case Study

This session presents a framework for reviewing Inclusion, Diversity, and Equity, and Anti-Racism (IDEA) in Open Educational Resources. This framework includes consideration for representing all groups, such as LGBTQIA, people with disabilities, people from various races, ethnicities, and cultures, students from low-income backgrounds, as well as any other historically underrepresented groups. Content creators who are building local resources are also encouraged to think about the various communities and demographics that make their geographical area unique. Content creators that are building broader resources are encouraged to consider global perspectives.

This framework is the result of our experiences during this process. We began our textbook audit almost two years ago after attending IDEA training provided by our college. This led to a collaboration with GSET (Butte College's Gender and Sexual Equity Taskforce) to develop a survey. This survey asked students and instructors in Biology and other disciplines to evaluate the inclusivity of our textbook. We then applied for and received a grant from the Academic Senate of California Community Colleges OER Initiative (ASCCC OERI) to revise the textbook. This survey was developed from scratch and will be revised based on what we learned during the process.

The framework currently has numerous components encouraging authors to: include images, names, and contributions from various countries without stereotypes; use gender-inclusive language; avoid ableist examples; explain the context of any examples because students bring different experiences to the class; avoid inappropriate terminology; for historical uses that should remain in place, add context, such as “a widely used term at the time,” and ensure that quotations or paraphrases using outdated terms are contextualized, and limited; and represent issues relevant to diverse populations.

Diverging from the traditional approach to discipline-specific textbooks can result in challenges from other educators. In our case, one of the most common concerns is that adding representation will decrease the time spent on “course content.” We were able to demonstrate that the inclusion of diverse reproductive strategies provides students with more current and more accurate information than traditional biology books. In some cases, we did find that the changes may need to move more slowly. For example, replacing all the pronouns with the gender-neutral “they” decreased readability for some individuals. We addressed this by introducing the gender-neutral pronoun in some areas and leaving the traditional pronouns in other areas of the book.

The UNESCO OER Recommendation Area of Action that this session addresses is “Encouraging inclusive and equitable quality OER.” The framework presented in this session provides a pathway for the adaptation of OER to increase inclusion and representation of diverse human experiences and identities. Our case study includes using a platform (LibreTexts) that allows for easy printing, interactive online components, and feedback from users to ensure relevance and accuracy. The framework presented focuses on gender and culturally inclusive content. The grant that supported our work included a requirement to build content that meets high accessibility standards.

We will engage the global community around the idea of a framework for auditing the inclusivity of our resources. We will share our framework and experiences as an example and will encourage others to audit and revise their own works.